

tasting&testing

WINE-TASTING ROOM

summer's best wines

by ray isle



10 CRISP, LIGHT WHITES

As tastes shift toward lighter, less alcoholic whites, especially for summertime, refreshing wines from places like Spain's Basque country and Australia's Eden Valley are turning up on more store shelves. Here, 10 of the best.

2008 Valentin Bianchi Elsa Torrontes (\$9) Torrontés, Argentina's most interesting white grape, tends towards melon and citrus notes and a flamboyant aroma. This bottling is made without using oak, which helps keep its flavors bright and lively.

2007 Domaine de la Batardière Muscadet (\$10) Muscadet, from the western part of France's Loire Valley, is a summer classic. Its citrusy character pairs ideally with seafood, particularly raw oysters.

NV Broadbent Vinho Verde (\$11) Vinho Verde—a pale Portuguese wine named for its youth rather than its color—should be crisp, tingly and full of lemon and seashell nuances. That aptly describes this bottling from importer Bartholomew Broadbent.

2007 Riff Pinot Grigio (\$11) This graceful, peachy white wine is made with grapes from Italy's informally designated "Tre Venezie" region—Alto Adige, Trentino and Veneto. Its musky finish gives it a complexity missing from many Pinot Grigios.

2008 Kung Fu Girl Riesling (\$12) Washington-state winemaker Charles Smith earned his reputation with some formidable (and fairly expensive) Syrahs, but lately, he's been focusing on a line of quirkily named, inexpensive wines. This floral, slightly off-dry Riesling is one of the best.

2008 Domaine Labbé Abymes Vin de Savoie (\$14) The Jacquère grape is obscure, as is the Savoie region near the Alps in eastern France. But this light-bodied wine (only 11 percent alcohol),

full of clean citrus fruit and chalky mineral notes, deserves to be better known.

2008 Peter Lehmann Eden Valley Riesling (\$16) The lime-zest and mineral characteristics typical of dry Australian Rieslings are amply present in this brisk bottling from South Australia's Eden Valley, one of the country's best Riesling regions.

2008 Saracco Moscato d'Asti (\$16) Moscato d'Asti, the off-dry, lightly sparkling wine native to Italy's Piedmont region, is exceptionally light in alcohol: usually only six percent or so. This graceful, tangerine-scented bottling from a top

producer would be great either as an aperitif or with fresh fruit for dessert.

2008 Ulacia Txakolina (\$19) Txakoli, the white wine of Spain's Basque region, has a light effervescence and a green apple-citrus flavor that is extraordinarily refreshing. This zippy rendition comes from a family-owned winery founded in the 1940s.

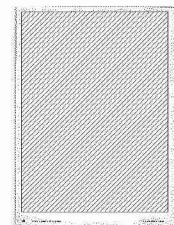
2008 Long Boat Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc (\$20) This white from Marlborough, New Zealand's most famous Sauvignon Blanc region, is herbal and peppery, but those flavors are balanced by juicy passion fruit notes.

WINE-CHILLING CHEAT SHEET

The fastest way to chill wine is in a bucket with ice and water. Here, some guidelines, starting at room temperature.

WINE TYPE	IDEAL TEMP	FRIDGE	FREEZER	ICE BUCKET
Sparkling	45°	5 hr	40 min	25 min
Crisp White	50°	3.5 hr	30 min	20 min
Rich White	55°	2 hr	25 min	15 min
Big Red	65°	45 min	15 min	10 min

PHOTOGRAPH: WENDELL T. WEBBER



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Portonic

A GREAT WINE COCKTAIL FOR SUMMER

At New York's Macao Trading Co., bartenders Jason Kosmas and Dushan Zaric serve this clever twist on the classic Portuguese white port and tonic.

2 ounces white port (such as Fonseca Porto Siroco)
 Dash of lime juice • Ice • 2 ounces tonic water
 1 slice of bitter melon or cucumber, plus 2 slices of seedless green grapes, skewered on a toothpick

Combine the port and lime juice in a wineglass with ice. Add the tonic. Garnish with the bitter melon or cucumber and grapes.

BEST BURGER PAIRINGS

The type of meat determines the best wine match (unless the burger is smothered in strong-flavored condiments).

	CLASSIC RED	UNEXPECTED RED	GREAT WHITE
BEEF	Rich, peppery Zinfandel: 2006 Ravenswood Napa Valley (\$15).	Powerful Sicilian Nero d'Avola: 2006 Colosi Rosso (\$12).	Rich, luscious Chardonnay: 2007 Newton Vineyard Red Label (\$25).
LAMB	Juicy, spicy Shiraz: 2007 Oxford Landing South Australia (\$8).	Earthy Portuguese red: 2004 Periquita Reserva (\$16).	Rhône-style white blend: 2007 Isenhower Cellars Snapdragon (\$17).
TURKEY	Fragrant, fruity Pinot Noir: 2006 Carmel Road Monterey (\$17).	Vibrant, berry-scented rosé: 2008 Mulderbosch (\$12).	Fruity, peach-inflected Pinot Gris: 2007 King Estate Signature (\$16).

5 Best Beach-Safe Wines

Cardboard boxes, Tetra Paks, aluminum bottles, even plastic mini barrels: More and more winemakers today are putting high-quality reds and whites in offbeat containers. That's good news for people who want to bring wine to the beach, since bare feet and glass bottles (which sometimes break when rattling around picnic baskets) aren't an ideal match. Here are five great options:

2007 Bandit Cabernet Sauvignon California (\$9/1L) Bandit's medium-bodied, curranty Cabernet has a licorice hint on the finish. It's packaged in lightweight, recyclable Tetra Paks.

2007 Mommessin Beaujolais Grande Réserve (\$15/750ml) This fresh, cherry-rich French red—which comes in an aluminum bottle with a screw top—tastes best when slightly chilled.

2007 Powers Cabernet Sauvignon Washington State (\$15/3L) Powers's Cabernet has been a great value for several vintages straight, with dark, rich blackberry fruit and a subtle hint of spicy oak. Now it's available in a three-liter box (the equivalent of four regular bottles).

2007 Boho Vineyards Central Coast Chardonnay (\$20/3L) This simple, tropical-fruit-inflected California white comes in an eco-friendly box made from recycled cardboard.

2007 Red Truck Wines Mini-Barrel (\$30/3L) Red Truck's miniature plastic wine barrel is filled with a spicy California Syrah blend and will stay fresh for six weeks after the first pour.



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